

Global Military Balance: *Stable or Unstable?*

What is the global military situation today, and where is it headed tomorrow? Although today's situation is more stable than a decade ago, flashpoints remain in such unsettled regions as the Persian Gulf and the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the future warrants concern. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and conventional force improvements could exacerbate tensions and conflict in several areas, in addition to today's hotspots.

Although military power is less central today than during the Cold War, it remains important to many countries' national security agendas. Their forces are shaping the new international security system. In appraising global military affairs and their strategic implications, national defense postures should be considered. What matters is how they compare with each other, and how they interact as they acquire more modern weapons.

Four factors are key to shaping the future military situation in each region and underscore the importance of following the evolution of global military affairs:

- *Type of Forces Deployed.* WMD is a key factor, but so are the region's conventional forces. Historically, small forces were indicative of defensive strategies, while large forces were

instruments of offensive operations, including aggressive actions. This pattern is changing. Quality is becoming an increasingly important factor. Small forces can still defend local borders. However, they can be used increasingly for offensive operations beyond these borders, if equipped with the assets for power projection, expeditionary missions, and offensive doctrines.

- *Rate and Direction of Modernization.* Military forces are constantly changing. They adopt new structures, weapons, and doctrines. Tomorrow's forces are likely to be considerably different from today's. Technology and the nature of war are undergoing rapid change because of the information revolution. Some countries may respond by maintaining defensive forces. Others may acquire greater offensive capabilities.

- *Nature and Degree of Military Competition.* Cooperation and partnership can improve relations among nations. Conversely, military rivalry can be the cause of political tensions and also inflame them. In serious military competitions, the danger is that the action-reaction cycle can intensify political and military dynamics in reinforcing ways.

- *The Balance/Imbalance of Military Power in Competitive Rivalries.* When countries within a region are in political accord, the local distribution of military power may be unimportant—but

The U.S.S. *Cowpens*, CG-63, a guided missile cruiser; the fleet oiler, U.S.S. *Yukon*, AO-202; and the U.S.S. *Milius*, DDG-69, a guided missile destroyer, supporting maritime intercept operations in the Persian Gulf



when they are in political conflict, the opposite is the case. An imbalance can undermine stability, especially when rogues gain military dominance and seek to upset the status quo. Conversely, a balance of power can have a stabilizing effect.

U.S. forces likely will remain superior to potential opponents and provide confidence that U.S. interests will be protected. However, adversary force improvements, asymmetric strategies, and WMD threats will be factors to be guarded against in U.S. defense planning. Moreover, U.S. superiority alone does not ensure a future military balance and stability abroad. U.S. superiority did not forestall ethnic war in the Balkans or prevent India and Pakistan from becoming nuclear powers. Much depends on how countries of each region perceive their situation, prepare their forces, and interact with each other.

If not monitored, military events can explode suddenly, too late for preventative action. Prior to the Persian Gulf War, Iraq successfully but quietly built strong forces in ways that rendered Kuwait and Saudi Arabia vulnerable. Large arsenals, abandoned in Yugoslavia when the Cold War ended, later fueled the Bosnian War. The earlier acquisition of technology provided China with the missiles that were launched near Taiwan in 1996 and surprised the rest of Asia. The 1998 nuclear explosions in

South Asia occurred because India and Pakistan privately pursued their nuclear intentions.

A growing number of countries understand the need for military restraint and multilateral cooperation. Yet, this trend is not evident everywhere, and situations in several regions could deteriorate. Today and tomorrow, the principal danger is not global war, but local strife, regional wars, and WMD use. Also, a new era of traditional geopolitical competition may emerge, in which some nations attempt to intimidate others with powerful military forces. While some political and military trends lessen these dangers, others enhance them. Three key regions differ in this respect. Europe's military situation is becoming more stable. The Greater Middle East is becoming more dangerous. Asia, particularly South Asia, could move in either direction, depending upon how events unfold.

A multidimensional view is necessary for thinking about the future of global military affairs. In all major theaters, three future scenarios ranging across the spectrum are plausible. In each region, the level of danger and threat could remain the same as today, but with a different mix of issues. Alternatively, regional military affairs

could move toward greater stability, or instability. Much depends on how regional politics transpire. Yet, military affairs have a dynamic of their own, with wide-ranging implications. How the United States and allies act upon key factors will influence which of these three scenarios occur. Their ability to act wisely will significantly affect global military affairs and determine if they evolve toward stability or instability. In this arena, as in others, the future is up for grabs.

Key Trends

Today, the task of assessing trends requires peering into the future amidst change almost everywhere. The multiple trends shaping global military affairs are outward manifestations of an underlying dynamic. Many countries are leaving behind the bipolar era and beginning to shape their defense postures for a new era that is more fluid and complicated and brings with it new military technology and doctrine. Some countries are thinking multilaterally, but, outside Europe, many are thinking in national terms. Many are defining national agendas in terms of self-protection and cooperative restraint, while some are looking outward. Regardless, change offers new politics and technologies. The future is likely to witness a blend of change and continuity, with change predominating over the long term.

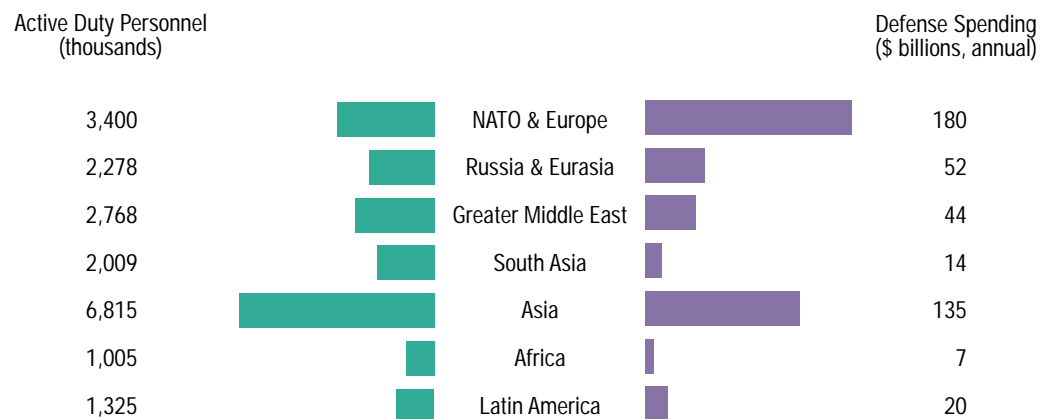
Views of the future differ, particularly regarding military affairs. Defense policy differs from diplomacy. Diplomacy mostly focuses on the current situation. Defense policy is heavily concerned with preparing forces for employment

10 to 15 years from now. Military forces improve slowly and do not make major changes overnight. Yet, in this era of rapid transformation, a decade or two can make a difference.

Discerning key trends requires looking at data on military forces and spending in key regions. The world remains well armed, even after the end of the Cold War. Outside the United States, nearly 20 million personnel are on active duty, and reservists roughly double that. U.S. forces account for about 6 percent of the global total. Outside the United States, about \$452 billion is spent annually on defense, at current exchange rates. Because expenditure comparisons are influenced by currency exchange rates, they often obscure the most important measure: the size and strength of forces being bought on the local economy. High U.S. defense costs are largely attributable to an all-volunteer force and buying goods and services from a prosperous U.S. economy. Most other countries benefit from low-cost conscription and buying goods and services in inexpensive economies. Their defense spending may allow a significantly greater output compared to what the defense dollar buys on the U.S. economy.

Moreover, these countries face lesser strategic requirements than the United States. Most are primarily concerned with their respective regions, and their military forces and spending are focused accordingly. However, the United States requires expensive power projection forces for three major overseas regions. It spends about \$90

Distribution of Non-U.S. Military Forces in Key Regions



Source: *The Military Balance, 1998/1999*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press).



U.S. Marines, part of a combined-arms, air-ground task force, with MP-5 submachine guns

billion for some 750,000 active troops that can be projected into overseas regions. Such costly requirements and others preclude a quantitative U.S. military dominance.

U.S. forces are qualitatively superior to any others. However, its military power is relative. Because of these far-reaching requirements, the United States must selectively mass its military strength in any single place. Additionally, U.S. forces operate in a world that remains heavily armed despite the defense downsizing of recent years. This is the case in all key regions, which are characterized by the following:

- Military spending and manpower levels remain high in Europe, despite stabilizing trends in recent years. In Eurasia overall, spending is low but manpower levels are high. Russia still maintains 1.2 million troops. Altogether, more than 2 million troops are under arms in Eurasia.

- In comparative terms, manpower levels are high, while spending levels are low in the Greater Middle East and South Asia. This low spending slows the pace of modernization in both places, but limited funds for new conventional weapons provide an incentive for acquiring WMD.

- In Asia, manpower and spending levels are higher than commonly realized. China, Japan, the two Koreas, and other countries maintain large forces. Although Asia's defense

spending is about 75 percent of Europe's, Asia's military manpower doubles Europe's. If Asia's wealth increases, this may permit larger defense budgets and faster modernization. However, if the economic crisis continues, it will adversely affect Asian military budgets.

- In Africa and Latin America, troop levels and budgets are low relative to population sizes and geography. Most militaries are used for civil control, rather than external operations, and are not modernly equipped. Nevertheless, light infantry weapons can inflict great damage, as has been seen in Somalia and Rwanda.

A Stable World with Dangerous Flashpoints

Gone is the risk of a bipolar confrontation escalating into global war and nuclear holocaust. Large alliances are no longer arrayed against each other. Today's world is less polarized and more diffuse. The West's gradual enlargement is making more countries confident of their security. The trend toward partnership is having a similar effect. The multiple arms control agreements in force, or under negotiation, also play a stabilizing role. Military power is no longer the primary means of enhancing a nation's standing in the world community. Developing an information-based economy is more important than military spending.

Yet, many countries throughout the world remain well armed. As they acquire modern weapons and spend more on readiness and training, their forces will improve in quality. Many rogues have sufficient forces for aggression and are acquiring modern weapons. Ethnic groups and terrorists can also acquire the weapons needed to inflict mass casualties. The Persian Gulf, the Korean peninsula, the Balkans, South Asia, and Taiwan are today's obvious flash points, but they are not the only places where violence and war are a threat.

Geopolitical Military Competition

The likelihood of regional conflicts will be influenced by the political conditions governing their origins and associated military conditions, especially whether or not aggression can succeed. Rogues will remain a principal instigator of regional conflicts, and some are acquiring WMD and better conventional forces to increase their military power. Iraq and Iran are examples and this trend may spread elsewhere.

A loose and amorphous strategic environment can be destabilizing. If it leads some countries to build military power that menaces others, it can result in the kind of geopolitical maneuvering that damaged the international system earlier in this century. The India-Pakistan interaction is an example. Their decisions to become nuclear powers are influenced by geopolitical motives, which include gaining major power status, intimidating each other, and deterring external threats. In the post-Cold War era, Europe and Asia have been spared great power competitions, but both regions have a history of succumbing to geopolitical rivalries. Such a possibility could emerge if the wrong set of political and military interactions were allowed.

A common fear is that a future great power rivalry might pit the United States against Russia or China in a new military competition. This fear is based on the possibility that one or both of these countries could become superpowers, or near-peers, in ways that would result in global confrontation with the United States. However, a rivalry is more likely to occur between these countries and other nations within their regions. Rivalry between Russia and Germany is one possibility; rivalry between China and Japan is another. Such rivalries would involve the United States because of alliances with Germany and Japan. Allies in such rivalries might seek U.S. military commitments rather than increase their own forces. Ultimately, this could lead to U.S. military competition with Russia or China. This scenario is improbable today, but not implausible in the future and should be prevented.

Medium Powers and Rogue Nations Seeking WMD

Most great powers are downsizing nuclear arsenals. At the same time they are pursuing arms control and nonproliferation through such mechanisms as the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and chemical and biological weapons conventions. However, some countries may be selling technological components and missiles to those seeking WMD to obtain hard currency. If this trend accelerates, it could stimulate further proliferation. Through increased cooperation, the great powers can slow proliferation, if not halt it.

WMD systems offer medium powers an inexpensive means of increasing military power and prestige. Such weapons enable rogues to coerce neighbors and deter outside intervention. Additionally, some nations may see WMD as deterring other WMD threats and aggression against legitimate interests. These considerations contribute to WMD proliferation, even if the international community condemns it and judges it to be counterproductive.

Prior to 1998, WMD proliferation was slower than many feared. However, events in South Asia have fueled concerns about proliferation. The chief risk is that India and Pakistan will build nuclear forces and that WMD proliferation will increasingly occur in the Greater Middle East and elsewhere. The Western community has tried to prevent Iran and Iraq from acquiring WMD and delivery systems; the results, though, are uncertain. If arms control and nonproliferation efforts fail, WMD proliferation could occur faster than some thought was possible. By 2005–10, the Greater Middle East and South Asia could include countries with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, and the means to deliver them over long distances. The consequences for regional security are complicated and hard to forecast, but they are unlikely to enhance stability. Indeed, regional stability could rest on a new balance of terror, but it would lack the mechanisms that enabled mutual deterrence in the Cold War.

Conventional Military Capabilities Key to Stability

Regional stability exists when all key countries believe that their conventional forces can defeat aggression, but cannot exploit their neighbors' disadvantages. By contrast, instability exists when rogues perceive that aggression will succeed without fear of reprisals, or when countries pursue desperate measures out of fear for their security. In addition to triggering wars, instability causes intense political and military competition, contributing to WMD proliferation, and shifting alliances.

Western democracies are confident in their conventional defenses. Beyond them, however, regional stability does not uniformly exist. The economic and military power of some regional countries is increasing, while it is declining for others. If the strength of peaceful, Western countries increases faster than that of rogues, stability will be enhanced. But, the opposite will occur if the power of rogue countries increases in ways



An F-15C preparing to fly a mission from Cervia Air Base, Italy, in support of Operation *Joint Forge*

that encourage predatory behavior. If future regional change is not managed carefully, the outcome could undermine stability, even if WMD proliferation is stemmed.

The changing nature of military operations is also becoming an important factor in stability; this transformation is addressed in chapter 17. The ongoing modernization and revolution in military affairs (RMA) resulting from the information age will greatly enhance combat power. It also will broaden the range of offensive capabilities for some countries. This transformation could be destabilizing to the degree that rogue countries benefit from it.

Modern weaponry is not always needed for aggression. Older weapons can still inflict widespread violence. They can be used to oppress those unable to defend themselves. Traditional infantry and artillery can destroy cities and annihilate large populated areas. This has been readily shown in the ethnic warfare of the Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa. Wars at the low end of the spectrum can cause immense destruction. Such low-level conflicts may be a principal manifestation of violence in the immediate future.

Lack of Allied Power Projection Capabilities

Despite the immense strength of NATO, members do not possess large forces capable of swift power projection, especially outside Europe. This is a Cold War legacy. Many European

countries have been reluctant to commit forces outside Europe. As a result, Europe relies mostly on the United States to defend common interests outside Europe. NATO is striving to improve its power projection forces, but progress is slow because of hesitant European attitudes and lack of funding. This is true in greater ways in Asia: Japan and South Korea have large forces for homeland defense, but almost no forces capable of being projected elsewhere in Asia. They also have no major plans or programs for developing such forces.

As a result, U.S. forces are primarily responsible for power projection missions in Europe, the Greater Middle East, and East Asia. The United States maintains sufficient forces for two concurrent major theater wars and is capable of initiating operations in all three regions. However, its capabilities provide little margin of assurance, in the event of unanticipated requirements. The lack of allied power projection capabilities will remain a serious impediment and risk.

Likelihood of European Stability

The U.S. military presence in Europe has been reduced from a Cold War level of 330,000 troops to 100,000 today. This presence is adequate for meeting U.S. peacetime requirements in NATO. Europe is becoming more militarily stable because of NATO enlargement and partnership activities, widespread military downsizing, the decline of Russia's forces, and an overall balance that allows most countries to defend themselves, with few vulnerable to aggression. The exception is the Balkans, where virulent ethnic differences and available weapons likely will remain a major concern.

NATO enlargement helps stabilize the area between Germany and Russia. It reduces the risk of military rivalry between these powers while reassuring the countries between them. Germany and most other European countries are expected to retain moderate strategies and forces focused on border defense and NATO missions. Russia will remain a nuclear power with conventional forces larger than any neighbor's but not sufficient to dominate Europe. Its military strategy is evolving, but it appears headed toward a downsized but modern military that can defend Russia's borders and vital

interests without resurrecting the specters of imperialism and militarism. Russia's reintegration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has not succeeded, which further reduces the military power available to it.

Regardless of whether Russia transitions to democracy, it is unlikely to pose a major threat to Europe again. It will significantly lack the military strength. At its zenith, the USSR had 5 million active troops and an army of 210 divisions. Today Russia has about 1.2 million troops and is seemingly headed toward an army of 35 to 50 divisions. Funding shortfalls have nearly crippled readiness and slowed modernization. These problems may be overcome; however, Russia will probably not be able to commit more than 25 divisions and 800 aircraft to a military operation. This force may be able to handle crises within the CIS and conduct limited, longer distance offensives. However, it cannot pose more than a single-axis threat to Europe. Such a threat is not anticipated because of efforts to establish a NATO-Russian partnership. It seems unlikely to transpire, unless

Russia's political reforms fail and an authoritarian, anti-Western regime is reestablished.

NATO can defend against any plausible conventional threat from the east or south. Its 58 mobilizable divisions, 3,600 combat aircraft, and 310 surface combatants seem able to handle plausible operations in both directions, simultaneously. The admission of new NATO members also will not overextend NATO posture. The three new members being admitted in 1999 will have large forces, and NATO plans to reinforce their defenses, if necessary.

However, European security faces challenges. Europe does not have adequate defenses to meet a WMD threat that could emerge from the Greater Middle East in the coming years. Because of funding shortfalls, readiness in some European forces is slowly declining. Insufficient procurement also may result in an increasing inability to operate with U.S. forces undergoing the RMA. These issues will challenge NATO military effectiveness in the coming years. While they could inhibit NATO ability to protect common interests outside Europe, they will not make Europe vulnerable to any foreseeable adversary.

The Balkans are likely to remain Europe's greatest area of instability. Although Serbia's military forces are large, they are less imposing than many realize. Today, Serbia has about 113,000 active-duty troops and 400,000 reservists equivalent to 6 divisions. It has 238 combat aircraft and a small navy. These forces can wage ethnic violence within the vicinity of Serbia's borders but not a major invasion requiring large field operations. Although Serbia's forces are larger than its neighbors', most of them have enough military power to contest an invasion. But the Kosovo crisis shows what can happen when a local region is militarily vulnerable to aggression.

Asia—Declining Threats and Increasing Military Complexities

Asia is more stable today than during the Cold War for several reasons: the Soviet Union no longer threatens Japan; U.S.-led efforts are underway to establish partnerships with countries in the region to include China; and the United States maintains 100,000 troops in Asia, mostly in Japan and Korea. Many believe that a continued, strong U.S. presence is critical to maintaining Asian stability in an era of change and uncertainty.

Asia lacks a collective security architecture. The results are a loose multipolar setting that

Military Forces of Major European Countries

	NATO Northern Region	NATO Southern Region	Russia	Ukraine	Serbia
Defense Spending (billions, U.S.\$)	122	39	64	1.3	1.5
Active Manpower (000's)	1,100	1,368	1,159	346	114
Division-Equivalents	22	36	45	13	6
Combat Aircraft	1,980	1,425	2,320	786	238
Major Naval Combatants	212	137	143	13	8

*Includes submarines

Military Forces of Key Asian Countries

	China	Japan	Taiwan	North Korea	South Korea	Indonesia
Defense Spending (billions, U.S.\$)	37	41	14	5	15	3
Active Manpower (000's)	2,280	243	376	1,055	672	299
Division-Equivalents	92	14	15	40	24	12
Combat Aircraft	4,100	429	560	607	488	77
Major Naval Combatants	115	80	40	29	52	19

Sources: *The Military Balance*, 1998/1999, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

could experience military tension and competition, if political relations deteriorated. This could be the case if China emerges as an ambitious regional power, and Asia's economic growth enables countries to continue modernizing their forces.

In Asia, Japan has the largest defense budget, the most modern forces, and the economic resources for force improvements. Its defense strategy remains focused on homeland defense rather than power projection. It currently has no plans to alter this strategy and is expected to maintain its current force size and mix in the middle to long term. This strategy is conditional upon U.S. military power remaining in Asia and contributing to Japan's security. If Japan changed strategies and acquired nuclear weapons and power projection forces, it would send shock waves throughout Asia. Such a possibility is unlikely, unless Japan perceives it has no other option.

The Korean peninsula remains a potential site for a major theater war. Although North Korea has a large army, configured for offensive action, the trends favor South Korea. South Korean forces are large relative to the borders they defend and benefit from entrenched positions on rugged terrain. Additionally, they would quickly be reinforced by more U.S. forces, if war occurred. If it did, Seoul might be lost or damaged because of its proximity to the demilitarized zone. However, U.S. and ROK forces would likely prevail in the end.

North Korea is seemingly living on borrowed time. Although North Korea has large forces, its annual economy is only \$21 billion and fails to provide for its people. It is also overshadowed by South Korea's economy of \$422 billion. As a result, South Korea's forces will likely grow stronger as they modernize, while North Korea's will stagnate and deteriorate. If so, this trend will steadily reduce the risk of another war, provided North Korea does not acquire nuclear weapons or launch an attack out of desperation.

This sets the stage for a diplomatic settlement of the Korean confrontation and eventual unification. Exactly when is impossible to tell. The defense strategy of a unified Korea will be an important factor in shaping Asia's future. It likely will be wary of offending China. However, a unified Korea's overall wariness of China, Russia, and Japan will likely cause it to remain close to the United States and within the Western alliance system.

Asia's most significant variable is China. Its nuclear arsenal is modest: 17 ICBMs, 70 IRBMs, and 1 SSBN. Its overall military posture, however, is quite large, despite recent downsizing. Its conventional forces include nearly 3 million troops, 92 mobilizable divisions, 4,100 combat aircraft, and 115 naval combatants. Its army is mostly composed of infantry units but also has 17 armored and mechanized division-equivalents. Numerically, China is superior to other Asian powers, including Japan, Russia, South Korea, and Taiwan. Its recent deployment of missiles opposite Taiwan is a serious concern.

Yet, China is limited in its ability to pose a major threat in the near term. Its forces suffer from low readiness, poor training, inadequate logistics, and obsolete equipment. China's overseas power projection capability is seriously constrained. It is not capable of invading Taiwan, Japan, or any other countries in the Pacific. China can conduct only limited land operations beyond its borders and small naval excursions. As long as these constraints are in place, Asia's overall military situation will remain stable.

A key issue is China's future military posture. To what degree will it develop modern forces, power projection assets, and a blue-water maritime capability? China currently is embarked on a military modernization program. It is producing its own weapons and buying modern equipment from Russia. It is likely to improve its ground and air forces for continental operations. If China acquired large numbers of missile-equipped naval combatants, amphibious forces, and even aircraft carriers, it would likely become a major maritime power. It might be seen as posing a threat to numerous offshore countries and important sea lines of communication leading to the Persian Gulf, other Asia-Pacific countries, and North America.

Some analysts believe that China is headed in this direction, but to what extent is difficult to determine. Its pursuit of maritime power would require the adoption of a conscious maritime strategy. Traditionally, China has been a continental power, yet many of its security experts are endorsing a maritime strategy in some form. Although this strategy would be new for China, it would be consistent with the geopolitical behavior of great powers.

China may be moving toward such a strategy, as indicated by its recent missile activity near Taiwan and naval activities in the South China Sea. A maritime strategy would allow China to defend its coasts and nearby waters, pursue control of Taiwan, gain leverage over the



C-17 Globemaster III
taking off from Charleston
Air Force Base, South
Carolina

policies of other Asian countries, and perhaps dominate and intimidate them. From China's perspective, this strategy would have drawbacks. It might polarize its Asian neighbors, a consequence China may be reluctant to accept. It sees being admitted to the Western-led global economy as important.

In the immediate future, China is unlikely to become a serious maritime power. Over the next few years, China will probably seek a moderate maritime strategy that has features of sea dominance and power projection but stops short of threatening many Asian countries. However, it could make significant progress toward improving its continental and maritime forces by 2010, if modernization accelerates. By 2020, it could be a major military power in the great Asian crescent stretching from the South China Sea to Japan. Such maritime capabilities could have destabilizing effects on the region. It would likely trigger military reactions from Japan, Korea, and other Asian countries. This is far from inevitable, thus Western countries are attempting to engage China and integrate it into the world community.

China's defense strategy and security policy will affect the situation in South Asia. India claims it became a nuclear power because it feared China's nuclear arsenal, territorial ambitions, and Pakistan's missile programs. India may act in ways that are plausibly defensive but pose threats to Pakistan. Chinese assistance to Pakistan could inflame existing tensions with

India over Kashmir. By contrast, if China emphasizes restraint and accommodation, it could help end a dangerous arms race and confrontation in South Asia.

The future of Asia will be determined by the strategic interaction of several countries. The strategies of China and Japan are especially important. They could create a strategic framework for all of Asia. Additionally, these two countries, plus Korea and Russia, could form a quadrangular relationship that would be key to regional stability. In Central and Southeast Asia, control of the vital sea lanes and the security of several countries will be essential to Asian stability. The critical variables will be the military strategies of key Asian countries, how they interact, and how they respond to crisis as well as opportunity.

Asia has the opportunity to promote collaborative ties and partnerships that leave all countries secure and with satisfied political interests. Asia also faces the danger of widespread geopolitical tension and military rivalry. A crisis that begins in Northeast Asia could spread to Southeast Asia and, ultimately, South Asia. Such a scenario could transpire, even if no hegemonic threat emerges. It could occur if several countries pursuing their own interests and acting out of fear take assertive military actions that cause neighbors to take dangerous countervailing actions. This could become an action-reaction cycle that gets out of control.

Theoretically, a multipolar competition can be stabilized by a regional military balance, even when interests are not balanced. In reality, this is fraught with difficulty. History shows that relying only on a military balance of power often inflames competitive rivalries, rather than diminishes them. For the United States, capitalizing on the opportunity for collaborative ties and partnerships while avoiding danger will be a key strategic challenge in the future.

Dangerous Military Developments in the Greater Middle East and South Asia

In the Greater Middle East, the United States relies on a small, temporary presence of about 20,000 troops in the Persian Gulf, which could be rapidly reinforced in the event of crises. The growing military danger is characterized by WMD proliferation and conventional force modernization. Rogue powers could gradually acquire a combination of WMD systems and better conventional forces. This could cause an imbalance of power, inviting trouble in the coming

decade. The region's political opportunity, however, lies in two possibilities: the Israeli-Arab peace process regaining momentum, and Iran and/or Iraq becoming less hostile to Western interests. Short of such progress, a regional military balance will be essential to deterring war and promoting stability. The conventional military situations in the Middle East and North Africa are displayed below.

Regional stability is based on the quantity and quality of forces. The dominant powers are Turkey and Israel. Turkey can defend itself against likely threats but would need NATO reinforcement to defeat a major attack. Israel is capable of defeating any single Arab country. Its principal threat has always been a coalition of several Arab countries. However, Israel's treaties with Egypt and Jordan reduce this risk. Neither Algeria nor Libya has sufficient forces to pose a major threat to Western interests. Currently, the main threat to peace and Western interests in the Middle East is terrorism. This already-serious threat could increase if the Israeli-Arab peace process stalls.

Despite current military stability, the region faces risks in the future. The gravest is war between Israel and Syria. Another risk is Egypt and/or Jordan falling under radical Islamic control, thereby creating a large anti-Western coalition in the Middle East and North Africa. Additionally, Libya and/or Algeria might acquire WMD systems and cruise missiles that could menace NATO control of the Mediterranean Sea lanes, or even Southern Europe. Modernization will gradually introduce new technologies into the forces of all countries. The acquisition of missiles will enhance each country's capacity to strike greater distances.

A military imbalance exists in the Persian Gulf region that only U.S. forces can rectify. Although Iraq's forces are smaller than during the

1990-91 Gulf War, they remain the region's largest and strongest and are still capable of offensive operations. Iran also has strong forces. Both Iraq and Iran pose serious military threats to Persian Gulf oilfields, sea lanes, and pro-Western countries, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The concern is that Iraqi and Iranian forces could become stronger. One or both countries might acquire WMD and the means to deliver them locally and at longer range. Both also seek to strengthen their conventional forces in ways that will broaden their offensive capabilities. Iran could pose an increased threat to Gulf sealanes, if it acquires improved aircraft, ships, and anti-shiping missiles. If Iraq acquires more agile and mobile forces, as well as improved air defenses, it could better pursue asymmetric strategies aimed at securing Kuwait and even parts of Saudi Arabia, before U.S. forces could arrive.

U.S. and Western policies seek to prevent such developments. However, there is a concern about the long term. If U.S. or Western support wavers, the Persian Gulf's already-unstable military situation will likely worsen, especially since Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE lack the forces to defend themselves against serious attack. Barring a resolution of Gulf political tensions, U.S. forces will be even more important in the future. Yet the U.S. commitment is constrained by Arab political sensitivities that prevent the basing of large U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. If these constraints remain, U.S. strategy will rely on a small peacetime presence in the Gulf, backed up by power projection and reception infrastructure. In any Gulf crisis, the United States will remain capable of deploying large forces. The risk is that a future conflict might be decided before U.S. forces could deploy. Military stability in the Persian Gulf will depend heavily on the speed of U.S. power projection.

Military Forces of Key Middle East Countries

	Algeria	Libya	Egypt	Israel	Jordan	Syria	Turkey
Defense Spending (billions, in U.S.\$)	2.1	1.4	2.7	11	.6	2.2	8.1
Active Manpower (000's)	122	65	450	175	104	320	639
Division-Equivalents	7	5	16	17	5	12	15
Combat Aircraft	181	420	609	474	93	589	440
Major Naval Combatants	5	5	22	4	0	5	21

Sources: *The Military Balance, 1998/1999*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Military Forces of Key Persian Gulf Countries

	Iran	Iraq	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	UAE
Defense Spending (billions, in U.S.\$)	1.3	5.8	18	2.9	2
Active Manpower (000's)	429	540	105	15	65
Division-Equivalents	25	13	3	1	2
Combat Aircraft	316	260	432	76	99
Major Naval Combatants	2	6	8	0	2

Sources: *The Military Balance, 1998/1999*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

In South Asia, nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have intensified the regional military situation. Regional stability depends on whether these countries will develop deployable nuclear weapons and delivery systems. If they do, their military value will depend on the nature of these forces: whether they can survive attacks or must be used first in a nuclear exchange. If both sides deploy vulnerable, hair-trigger forces, the situation will be highly unstable and susceptible to rapid nuclear escalation in a crisis. If they develop survivable forces, a mutual deterrence could evolve and produce a stable situation. If nuclear proliferation intensifies, creating survivable nuclear forces is the safest possibility, but it would not be cheap or easy, especially for countries lacking funds, as well as, nuclear experience.

Conventional forces will also affect Indian and Pakistani relations. India is numerically superior. However, Pakistan tries to offset quantity with quality. Its forces can conduct sizable military operations and would not be readily defeated. India has won three wars against Pakistan in the past 50 years. It would likely win limited victories again, if war occurred, but at high cost. India is constrained by its perceived vulnerability to China. In the long term, India has the size to become a regional hegemon. Its navy includes two small carriers, plus 24 destroyers and frigates. It is able to assert a maritime presence in the Indian Ocean. Like Pakistan, India has a poor economy and low per capita income that limit its modernization. Both countries currently rely on military assistance from other countries.

U.S. Interests

Global military trends have important implications for U.S. national security strategy and

defense planning. The United States has compelling reasons for being able to win wars while shaping peacetime security relationships that promote integration, prevent instability, and deter conflict in areas vital to its interests.

Global Military Trends

Stabilizing military trends are those that promote peace and integration and impede competition and war; these are very much in keeping with U.S. interests. Destabilizing trends have the opposite effect. Today's destabilizing trends provide powerful reasons for strong U.S. forces to remain engaged abroad in the foreseeable future.

U.S. overseas presence and power projection capabilities will be critical to reassuring allies and other friends. This reassurance prevents many countries, including Germany and Japan,

Military Forces in South Asia

	Pakistan	India
Defense Spending (billions, in U.S.\$)	1	3.4
Active Manpower (000's)	1,175	587
Division-Equivalents	39	262
Combat Aircraft	839	417
Major Naval Combatants	44	20

Sources: *The Military Balance, 1998/1999*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

from becoming nuclear powers and encourages them to refrain from building up conventional forces. U.S. forces will also be used to deter rogues, prevent competitive rivalries, and handle crises and wars that periodically occur. Continued U.S. military presence in three key regions will be critical to protecting U.S. interests, promoting stability, and remaining prepared for future crises. If the United States were to disengage, destabilizing changes would likely occur in these regions.

Yet, the continuation of this presence should not be taken for granted. In each region, pressures may be building to reduce it. The rationale for basing U.S. forces in Europe could be undermined by the absence of a clear threat to NATO, an inward-looking EU, and European hesitancy to embrace new missions. In Asia, fading old threats could also undermine the rationale for U.S. forces in Japan and Korea. Domestic and for-



SH-60B Sea Hawk firing an AGM-114 missile during Exercise COMUTEX off the coast of Puerto Rico

eign pressures could force their withdrawal, unless a new strategic rationale is found. In the Persian Gulf, friendly countries want to limit U.S. military presence, while rogue countries seek its removal altogether.

Ensuring an adequate and engaging presence in all three regions will require a conscious effort by the United States. The key will be working with allies and partners to develop new rationales for strong multilateral ties and emphasizing U.S. contributions to stability.

In a complex and changing world, regional wars and other conflicts might erupt in several unpredictable places, in addition to the Persian Gulf and Korea. U.S. forces must be sufficiently flexible and adaptive to meet a wide spectrum of crises in all major regions.

Additionally, global trends emphasize the need for U.S. defense policies and plans to shape the international security environment. U.S. forces will conduct such key shaping missions as reassuring allies and friends, developing partnerships with many countries, deterring rogues, and dampening geopolitical and military competition in key regions. To the extent that U.S. policies succeed at shaping and stabilizing regions, the likelihood of crises and wars will be reduced.

U.S. forces will need to be prepared for the military challenges of 2010 and beyond, which will increase in severity as foreign forces modernize and grow stronger.

WMD Proliferation

The prospect of accelerating WMD poses a major threat to U.S. interests. They could be used against U.S. forces, the U.S. homeland, or allied forces and territory. Additionally, these weapons could contribute to a climate of political instability and facilitate the use of conventional forces for aggression. The cumulative effect of WMD poses a formidable threat to U.S. interests.

The United States clearly has an interest in halting the spread of WMD. Its efforts to do this include reliance on arms control treaties and international institutions, but the ultimate success of these is uncertain. Future WMD proliferation is especially likely in the Greater Middle East and South Asia. These are unstable regions where a well-established Western-style alliance system does not exist. If WMD proliferation occurs in these and other regions, it will contribute to a more dangerous world and greatly complicate the conduct of U.S. policy and strategy. It will affect the full spectrum of U.S. activities, from diplomacy to contingency war plans.

Conventional Force Trends Threatening U.S. Interests

The United States has an interest in promoting military stability and balance in key regions. These conditions foster a reassuring political climate that helps protect allies, deters rogue country conduct, and restrains key countries from attacking each other. Emerging trends underscore the feasibility of such conditions in many places—but not everywhere. U.S. interests could be threatened, if rogue states improve their conventional forces in ways that achieve superiority over neighbors. They might also be challenged, if the offensive capabilities of potential U.S. opponents benefit from trends in modern technology and doctrine. Such future trends could intensify military competitions and have a destabilizing effect on key regions, even where rogue countries do not exist. Arms control and multilateral accords can help. Even so, U.S. force modernization is needed to meet these developments, as well as to prepare for future wars.

Risk to U.S. Forces

Emerging trends place greater emphasis on U.S. forces being able to operate beyond the strategic perimeters of Cold War alliances and in distant regions where common Western interests are at stake. Unless allies and partners significantly contribute to these missions, U.S. forces

will be left to perform the bulk of them alone. This could cause an overstretch in global responsibilities that would be unhealthy for the Western Alliance. It would create unfair burdensharing and would risk alienation between the United States and its allies.

Global Military Trends in Key Regions

The United States has an interest in shaping future global military affairs in ways that help consolidate military integration and cooperation in Europe, keep Asia militarily stable, and prevent any military deterioration in the Greater Middle East. Emerging trends suggest that these European goals will be achievable. Asian goals are feasible, but only with a concerted effort and good fortune. Middle East goals will face increasingly difficult challenges. These prospects create reasons for the United States to develop strategies that are tailored to the dynamics of each region. Moreover, the United States will face requirements to distribute its scarce resources effectively among the separate theaters. This could mean difficult decisions regarding defense priorities. These regions should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of the larger strategic context confronting U.S. defense planning.

Consequences for U.S. Policy

Although current U.S. policies are mostly succeeding, they may be increasingly challenged by emerging military trends. This development may create incentives for new policies that might better ensure U.S. interests.

Strategic Planning Frameworks

The prospect of changing global military affairs emphasizes the need for a U.S. strategy that relies on shaping functions, including the use of its military power. Coherent strategic theories are needed to apply shaping functions effectively. They must ensure that means are aligned with ends and critical goals are achieved.

Today's shaping functions are three coordinated and reinforcing activities: promoting integration and stability, preventing instability and competition, and deterring aggression against Western interests and values. The development

of these shaping functions poses a number of questions. How are they best performed? What are the strategic mechanisms that link cause and effect? What are the implications for U.S. defense resources and program priorities? The answer to these and related questions will be key to fashioning strategic theories for the shaping function.

The same applies to the preparing function. Tomorrow's global military situation may be quite different from today's. Preparing for the future mandates modernization, plus adoption of concepts embodied in the RMA and *Joint Vision 2010*. It also means preparing U.S. forces to be able to shape tomorrow's strategic environment. Current military trends suggest that U.S. forces will be called upon to prevent destabilization and deter aggression. Their ability to perform these key roles in tomorrow's world will greatly determine their strategic effectiveness.

New Approaches to WMD Proliferation

If WMD proliferation does occur, new approaches will be required for a new set of challenges. Current U.S. strategic precepts, which include containment, deterrence, forward defense, flexible response, and arms control, are inherited from the Cold War and may not apply to these new challenges.

One issue will be how to deal with WMD-armed rogues that may be willing to use these weapons to change the status quo. Another issue will be reassuring vulnerable countries outside the Western alliance system. A third issue will be determining U.S. response to a crisis in which WMD systems might be employed. A fourth issue will be the kind of defenses needed to protect the forces and homelands of not only the United States but its allies. Addressing these issues will require new strategic thinking in advance of the threat.

Over-Reliance on High Technology

The RMA will be the deciding factor in wars that are characterized by classic air and armored operations, such as those in the Persian Gulf War. However, future crises and wars may involve conditions that do not permit high technology to be predominant. In such conflicts, political circumstances will affect the types of U.S. military operations that can be initiated. The nature of the warning, mobilization, deployment, reinforcement, and buildup may produce force arrays different from those in the Gulf War. Geography,

terrain, and weather also may not be ideal or suited to U.S. forces. High technology should be regarded as one important factor, but not the only factor, in preparing for future conflict. Remaining militarily superior to opponents will also depend on mastering readiness, operations, doctrine, and strategy. The Kosovo crisis is a reminder that, while high technology is part of the solution, it is not always the whole solution.



MH-60 Pavement Hawk over the Republic of Korea during Exercise *Foal Eagle* '98

Improved Allied Power Projection

U.S. policies are making slow headway in this area, but the progress may not be fast enough to meet mounting power projection demands. Improved allied power projection capabilities are needed for shaping, responding, and preparing for the future strategic environment. They must be able to deal with a host of opportunities and dangers in distant regions. New U.S. policies are needed to provide more assertive leadership, credible ideas for altered allied programs and force priorities, and multilateral responses in the three key regions. Success in this endeavor will greatly determine the health of the Western Alliance and its ability to meet challenges in the new era.

New Regional Defense Priorities

U.S. defense policy will need to deal with the military situation in each region, not only as it exists today, but as it evolves toward an uncertain but malleable outcome. Europe, Asia, and the Greater Middle East are changing in different ways. The challenge will be to design appropriate strategies and forces for each. These regional approaches must add up to a coherent whole and a coordinated global strategy.

Change will need to guide the U.S. overseas military presence. Its mission of engagement will require continuous adaptation to the unfolding international scene. In Europe, U.S. forces will lead NATO in preparing for new missions in the region and elsewhere in defense of common interests. In the Middle East and Persian Gulf, U.S. forces likely will be preparing for new threats, dangers, and challenges, including WMD proliferation. In Asia, U.S. forces likely will shift away from defending Korea to promoting stability and preventing competition in the Asia-Pacific region. How should the future U.S. overseas presence in all three theaters be adjusted? How will power projection forces in the United States be affected? The answers will help define future U.S. defense strategy.

Net Assessment

The global distribution of military power is important for several reasons: it reflects underlying political relations in many key regions; for good or ill, it influences how these relations will evolve and it sets the stage for determining how crises and wars will unfold. While today's setting is more stable than during the Cold War, it has numerous regional flashpoints. Although tomorrow's trends are uncertain, some give cause for concern. WMD proliferation could be especially destabilizing, but adverse trends in conventional forces could be also. As a result, future military trends bear close scrutiny. U.S. policy will face compelling reasons to shape, prepare, and respond to their impacts as they occur. A main conclusion of this chapter is that proactive efforts to shape and stabilize the global military balance will remain a key factor in U.S. strategy and likely will become more important as the future unfolds.

